

John 2:1-12
April 27, 2025

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Many people who aren't followers of God think He is a kill-joy God. They feel that if they were to become "religious," it would take away everything that is fun and brings joy to them. So why do you think this is a popular notion? To what extent do you think it's true or untrue? [Let people engage.]

Transition: God is not a kill-joy God! In today's text, Jesus begins his formal ministry with his first sign, turning water into wine at a wedding feast. We see Jesus going to a wedding in a small town of Cana in Galilee three days after calling the first of His disciples. Jesus is with his mom and at least five disciples (Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and unnamed disciple who is likely John.)

Jewish wedding feasts were quite different than what we see in our culture. In Jesus' day, weddings were seven (7) days long and like a long family reunion. They feasted, danced and celebrated! But a crisis pops up while they are there. They ran out of wine, which would be considered a sign of social embarrassment. Mary approaches Jesus with this problem, so let's see what happens from here. Let's begin.

BOOK:

Jesus Changes Water Into Wine

- 1** On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there,
- 2** and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.
- 3** When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."
- 4** "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."
- 5** His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."
- 6** Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.
- 7** Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.
- 8** Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so,
- 9** and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside
- 10** and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."
- 11** What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.
- 12** After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What stood out to you? What questions do you have? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about man? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit? [Let people engage]

Q: What is your takeaway? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Jesus is always available and willing to meet our needs. Where is the “wine” level (zest for life) in your life right now? Full? Half full? Empty? What is draining you? What area seems like stale water in an old jug? Ask Jesus to renew that for you!

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 290-292). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.*

The six disciples who now trusted Jesus started on their lifelong walk with Him and from the beginning began to learn more about Him. We who read the Gospel record in its entirety are prone to take these events for granted; but to the disciples, each day and each new event brought marvels that were difficult to understand. In this chapter alone, John recorded three wonderful revelations of Jesus Christ.

His Glory (John 2:1–12)

“The third day” means three days after the call of Nathanael (John 1:45–51). Since that was the fourth day of the week recorded in John (John 1:19, 29, 35, 43), the wedding took place on “the seventh day” of this “new creation week.” Throughout his Gospel, John makes it clear that Jesus was on a divine schedule, obeying the will of the Father.

Jewish tradition required that virgins be married on a Wednesday, while widows were married on a Thursday. Being the “seventh day” of John’s special week, Jesus would be expected to rest, just as God rested on the seventh day (Gen. 2:1–3). But sin had interrupted God’s Sabbath rest, and it was necessary for both the Father and the Son to work (John 5:17; 9:4). In fact, John recorded two specific miracles that Jesus deliberately performed on Sabbath days (John 5; 9).

At this wedding, we see Jesus in three different roles: the Guest, the Son, and the Host.

Jesus the Guest (vv. 1–2). Our Lord was not a recluse, as was John the Baptist (Matt. 11:16–19). He accepted invitations to social events, even though His enemies used this practice to accuse Him (Luke 15:1–2). Our Lord entered into the normal experiences of life and sanctified them by His presence. Wise is that couple who invite Jesus to their wedding!

He was accompanied by His mother and His six disciples. Perhaps it was the addition of seven more people that helped create the crisis; but it must have been a small wedding feast if this were the case. We have reason to believe that our Lord’s earthly family was not prosperous, and it is likely that their friends were not wealthy people. Perhaps the shortage of wine was related to a low-budget feast.

Were Jesus and His disciples invited because of Mary, or because of Nathanael? (John 21:2) Our Lord was not yet well known; He had performed no miracles as yet. It was not likely that He was invited because the people knew who He was. It was probably His relationship with Mary that brought about the invitation.

Jesus the Son (vv. 3–5). Since Jewish wedding feasts lasted a week, it was necessary for the groom to have adequate provisions. For one thing, it would be embarrassing to run out of either

food or wine; and a family guilty of such gaucherie could actually be fined! So, to run out of wine could be costly both financially and socially.

Why did Mary approach Jesus about the problem? Did she actually expect Him to do something special to meet the need? Certainly she knew who He was, even though she did not declare this wonderful truth to others. She must have been very close to either the bride or the bridegroom to have such a personal concern for the success of the festivities, or even to know that the supply of wine was depleted. Perhaps Mary was assisting in the preparation and serving of the meal.

Mary did not tell Jesus what to do; she simply reported the problem. (Compare the message of Mary and Martha to Jesus, when Lazarus was sick—John 11:3.) Jesus' reply seems a bit abrupt, and even harsh; but such is not the case. "Woman" was a polite way to address her (John 19:26; 20:13), and His statement merely means, "Why are you getting Me involved in this matter?" He was making it clear to His mother that He was no longer under her supervision (it is likely that Joseph was dead), but that from now on, He would be doing what the Father wanted Him to do. There had been a hint of this some years before (Luke 2:40–52).

At this point, John introduced one of the key elements of his record, the idea of "the hour." Jesus lived on a "heavenly timetable," marked out for Him by the Father. (See John 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; 17:1; and note also the words of Jesus as recorded in John 11:9–10.) As you study John's Gospel, you will observe how this concept of "the hour" is developed.

Mary's words to the servants reveal that she was willing to let her Son do whatever He pleased, and that she trusted Him to do what was right. It would be wise for all of us to obey what she said! It is worth noting that it was Jesus, not Mary, who took command and solved the problem; and that Mary pointed, not to herself, but to Jesus.

Jesus the Host (vv. 6–12). Our Lord's first miracle was not a spectacular event that everybody witnessed. Mary, the disciples, and the servants knew what had happened; but nobody else at the feast had any idea that a miracle had taken place. His first miracle was a quiet event at a wedding in contrast to His last miracle recorded by John (John 11), a public event after a funeral.

Each of the six stone waterpots could contain about twenty gallons each. However, we are not told that all of the available water in the jars turned into wine. Only that which the servants drew out and served was transformed into wine. The quality of this new wine was so superior that the man in charge of the banquet highly praised it and, of course, the groom's family basked in the glory of the compliments.

The fact that this was "the beginning of miracles" automatically declares as false the stories about the miracles performed by Jesus when He was an Infant or a young Child. They are nothing but superstitious fables and ought to be rejected by anyone who accepts the authority of the Bible.

The miracle did something for His disciples. It revealed His glory (John 1:14) and gave them a stronger foundation for their faith. Though miracles *alone* are insufficient evidence for declaring Jesus to be the Son of God (2 Thes. 2:9–10), the cumulative effect of miracle after miracle should certainly convince them of His deity. The disciples had to begin somewhere, and over the months, their faith deepened as they got to know Jesus better.

But there is certainly more to this miracle than simply meeting a human need and saving a family from social embarrassment. The Gospel of John, unlike the other three Gospels, seeks to share the *inner meaning*—the spiritual significance—of our Lord’s works, so that each miracle is a “sermon in action.” We must be careful not to “spiritualize” these events so that they lose their historical moorings; but, at the same time, we must not be so shackled to history that we are blind to (as A.T. Pierson used to say) “His story.”

To begin with, the word John used in his book is not *dunamis*, which emphasizes power, but *semeion*, which means “a sign.” What is a sign? Something that points beyond itself to something greater. It was not enough for people to believe in Jesus’ works; they had to believe in Him and in the Father who sent Him (John 5:14–24). This explains why Jesus often added a sermon to the miracle and in that sermon interpreted the sign. In John 5, the healing of the paralytic on the Sabbath opened the way for a message on His deity, “the Lord of the Sabbath.” The feeding of the 5,000 (John 6) led naturally into a sermon on the Bread of Life.

If our Lord had preached a sermon after He turned the water into wine, what might He have said? For one thing, He likely would have told the people that the world’s joy always runs out and cannot be regained, but the joy He gives is ever new and ever satisfying. (In the Scriptures, wine is a symbol of joy. See Judg. 9:13 and Ps. 104:15.) The world offers the best at the first, and then, once you are “hooked,” things start to get worse. But Jesus continues to offer that which is best until we one day enjoy the finest blessings in the eternal kingdom (Luke 22:18).

But our Lord would certainly have a special message here for His people, Israel. In the Old Testament, the nation is pictured as “married” to God and unfaithful to her marriage covenant (Isa. 54:5; Jer. 31:32; Hosea 2:2ff). The wine ran out, and all Israel had left were six empty waterpots! They held water for *external* washings, but they could provide nothing for internal cleaning and joy. In this miracle, our Lord brought fullness where there was emptiness, joy where there was disappointment, and something *internal* for that which was only external (water for ceremonial washings).

When John mentioned “the third day” (John 2:1), he may have been giving us a hint of our Lord’s resurrection. All of these blessings are possible because of His sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection from the dead (John 2:19).

Interestingly Moses’ first miracle was a plague—turning water into blood (Ex. 7:19ff), which speaks of judgment. Our Lord’s first miracle spoke of grace.

This miracle also presents a practical lesson in service for God. The water turned into wine because the servants cooperated with Jesus and obeyed His commands. Several of the signs in John's Gospel involve the cooperation of man and God: the feeding of the 5,000 (John 6), the healing of the man born blind (John 9), and the raising of Lazarus (John 11). Whether we pass out bread, wash away mud, or roll away the stone, we are assisting Him in performing a miracle.

It is significant that the servants knew the source of this special wine (John 2:9). When Jesus healed the nobleman's son (John 4:46–54), it was the servants who were in on the secret. We are not just His servants; we are also His friends, and we know what He is doing (John 15:15).

Wine was the normal drink of the people in that day, and we must not use this miracle as an argument for the use of alcoholic beverages today. A man given to drink once said to me, "After all, Jesus turned water into wine!"

My reply was, "If you use Jesus as your example for drinking, why don't you follow His example in everything else?" Then I read Luke 22:18 to him. This verse clearly states that, in heaven now, Jesus is a teetotaler!

Sincere Christians of our day consider such verses as 1 Corinthians 8:9; 10:23, 31 before concluding that the use of alcoholic beverages is a wise thing today. I am reminded of the story of the drunken coal miner who was converted and became a vocal witness for Christ. One of his friends tried to trap him by asking, "Do you believe that Jesus turned water into wine?"

"I certainly do!" the believer replied. "In my home, He has turned wine into furniture, decent clothes, and food for my children!"

Finally, it is worth noting that the Jews always diluted the wine with water, usually to the proportion of three parts water to one part wine. While the Bible does not command total abstinence, it certainly *magnifies* it and definitely warns against drunkenness.

Blum, E. A. (1985). *John*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 278-279) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

3. Jesus' first sign (2:1–11).

Jesus' first miracle in the Gospel of John was a private one, known only to His disciples, some servants, and probably Jesus' mother. If Matthew had not yet been called to be one of the Twelve, this may explain why the miracle is not recorded in the Synoptics. Of the four Gospel writers only John was there. John used the word "signs" (*sēmeiōn*, v. 11) because he was seeking to draw attention away from the miracles as such and to point up their significance. A miracle is also a "wonder" (*teras*), a "power" (*dynamis*), and a "strange event" (*paradoxos*).

This turning water into wine was the first of 35 recorded miracles Jesus performed. (See the chart listing those miracles, the places where they happened, and the references in the Gospels.)

2:1. **On the third day** probably means three days after the calling of Philip and Nathanael. (Cf. the sequence of days suggested by “the next day” in 1:29, 35, 43.) It would take a couple of days to reach **Cana in Galilee** from Bethany near Jericho of Judea (1:28). Cana was near Nazareth, though its exact location is unknown. **Jesus’ mother was there**, but John did not give her name (cf. 2:12; 6:42; 19:25–27). In his Gospel, John never named himself or the mother of Jesus. (Jesus’ mother went to the home of the beloved disciple John [19:27].)

2:2–3. Oriental wedding feasts often lasted seven days. The feast followed the groom’s taking of his bride to his home or his father’s house, before the consummation of the marriage. When the supply of **wine** was used up, Mary turned to Jesus in hope that He could solve the problem. Did Mary expect a miracle? In the light of verse 11 this is not likely. Mary had not yet seen any miracles done by her Son.

2:4–5. The word **woman** applied to His mother may seem strange to a modern reader, but it was a polite, kind expression (cf. 19:26). However, the clause, **Why do you involve Me?** was a common expression in Greek that referred to a difference in realms or relations. Demons spoke these words when they were confronted by Christ (“What do You want with us?” [Mark 1:24]; “What do You want with me?” [Mark 5:7]). Mary had to learn a painful lesson (cf. Luke 2:35), namely, that Jesus was committed to God the Father’s will and the time for His manifestation was in the Father’s hand. **My time has not yet come** or similar words occur five times in John (2:4; 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20). Later the fact that His time had come is mentioned three times (12:23; 13:1; 17:1). Mary’s response **to the servants (Do whatever He tells you)** revealed her submission to her Son. Even though she did not fully understand, she trusted Him.

2:6–8. The water in the **six ... water jars** (of **20 to 30 gallons** each) was **used** for Jewish purification rites before and after meals (cf. Matt. 15:1–2). The contrast between the old order and the new way is evident (cf. John 4:13; 7:38–39).

Probably the water jars were outside. **The master of the banquet**, in charge of the festivities, would not know he was drinking from the purification jars. For a Jew this would be unthinkable. The servants dipped out the water, which had become wine.

White, J. E. (1998). *John*. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (p. 468). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Providing Pure Wine (2:1–11)

Jesus’ first miracle was at a wedding at Cana of Galilee where He turned water into wine. A wedding feast during this period of history might last as long as a week, with poor hospitality treated as a serious offense; and this celebration had run out of wine. The symbolism of this

event should not be lost on the reader, for the water used for purification was replaced by wine, that which would come to symbolize the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ did indeed supplant the Jewish ceremonial system in regard to the predicament of sin in light of a holy God.

That Jesus was aware of His “time” and the progress of His mission is evident throughout this Gospel (7:6, 8, 30; 8:20). The cross was ever before Jesus, and His movement toward that inevitable moment was to remain on God’s timetable (12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1). As is the pattern of this Gospel, miracles are referred to as “signs” (*semeion*), intimating that they served as authentication for Jesus’ nature and mission. In the Synoptics the most commonly used word for miracles is *dunameis*, which refers to mighty works that demonstrate the power of God.

Allen, J. P. (1972). *John*. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The Teacher’s Bible Commentary* (pp. 667-668). Broadman and Holman Publishers.

The Beginning of Signs (John 2:1–25)

The passage—John now proceeds to show how signs produce faith in some, rejection by others. The key in this chapter is the repetition of the idea concerning belief (vv. 11, 22, 23).

Two signs are described, and others only stated. One of the miracles took place before the eyes of the disciples. The second was verbal, and its meaning was not clear to them until after the resurrection—the greatest miracle.

Special points—You need to see it as John saw it. He had followed a new master, but he knew very little about him. There were already five disciples: John, Andrew, Peter, Phillip, Nathanael (possibly James). Jesus understood their need to have reasons for believing. An opportunity came quite naturally at the wedding festival to which they had been invited.

Cana was near enough to Nazareth for Mary to be there, and in some authority. When the wine failed she under-took to relieve the embarrassment. Jesus and his friends were outside the banquet hall, since they were near the water jars. These had contained water used in the Jewish rites of purification (v. 6). As such they were strictly not permitted near food or drink.

Mary probably meant for Jesus to send for more wine. His response to her was not disrespectful. It likely was his way of reminding her that the new status between them was never again to be a simple mother-son relationship. He was committed to another role, another kingdom.

In a moment Jesus decided what he would do. The six stone jars there suggested the sign to him. The number is important—six. It was the worst number to the Jews, falling just short of the perfect seven. And the water pots were identified with ceremonial law. So then, what if he filled each container with water to the brim? Would not this signify fulfilment, completion? And, what if the water next drawn from the well should suddenly become wine? Could that not suggest that spirit (the lively wine) was superior to formal law the water? Would not the entire episode

declare to those who saw that he, himself, had the right to bring the old ways to fulfillment and originate the new?

This is what Jesus did, and a splendid reason for doing it. He had no interest in merely making wine. He was revealing himself. His mission was not to make the wedding feast merry. It was to lead men to believe in him as creator and Lord of his new kingdom.

Did he accomplish his end? Verse 11 makes it plain, “And his disciples believed on him.”

The word “sign” appears again in verse 18. The Jewish leaders had rallied from their shock after Jesus drove the animals from the Temple area. They demanded some token of his authority. He really gave them a sign, it was just that they did not recognize it.

You cannot but wonder if Jesus casually laid his hand on his own breast when he said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (v. 19). Whether he did or not, it was his meaning. That supreme act of his divine nature, his resurrection was full proof of his authority over God’s Temple. He was God; but they were then incapable of accepting it. But at the right time, “his disciples remembered” (v. 22), and that was the important thing. When they remembered, they believed.

Truth for today—We who follow Christ need the same prod to faith that John did. In the prologue he declared, “All things were made by him” (1:3). Our discipleship is not of a mild-mannered teacher who pleads for loyalty. We follow One whose power made the worlds. He speaks and everything in nature recognizes his authority. He has the rights of Creator.

And we are his new creation. Freed from legalisms and mere regulations, we are sons of a spiritual realm. It is high above every form of ritual religion. As the water looked at its creator and blushed into wine, so we are free from dead works, and alive to his vital presence.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). John 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

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